(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Bhakhtiyarpur-Purnea Section of National Highways No. 31, which includes Pasraha-Narayanpur portion, is proposed for upgradation under National Highways Development Project (Phase-III) by National Highways authority of India for which the preparation of Detailed Project Report is under progress. Therefore, it is too early to comment on the execution of civil construction works on the aforesaid portion of National Highway No. 31. However, an estimate amounting to Rs. 290.88 Lakhs has been sanctioned in March, 2005, which includes repair of this Section.

Ship acquisition programme

3845. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Shipping Corporation of India has drawn up a $500 million ship acquisition programme;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that the shipyards, the world over, are not able to accept fresh orders for new vessels till 2007 and the Shipping Corporation of India may have to wait for its expansion plan till then or explore other ways, amongst others, to pick up second-hand vessels or opt for chartering them; and

(d) if so, the details of the fresh strategy drawn up to augment the fleet capacity?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) has proposed acquisition of 18 vessels at a total estimated investment of about US$ 800 million, as per details given below:

2(no.) Capesize Bulk Carriers

2(no.) VLCC

6(no.) Handymax Bulk Carriers

2(no.) 4,300 TEU Container Vessels

6(no.) LR-I size Product Tankers

(c) and (d) Major Shipyards all over the world have full order book position till 2008. Hence, delivery of vessels can be expected only during 2009 or later, if order is placed now. SCI prefers to acquire new building tonnage. However, acquisition of second-hand vessel or in-chartering of suitable vessels is considered in case the situation demands so and SCI's own tonnage is not available.

Opening of motor driving schools

†3846. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to open Government Driving Schools with a view to strengthen the road safety in the country and to develop the safe driving habit;

(b) if so, the details thereof location-wise; and

(c) the details of Government's strategy in this regard and the effective steps being taken by Government to implement this policy in the public interest?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) to (c) The Ministry has a Plan Scheme under which financial assistance for setting up of model driving training school to States/UTs/Non-Governmental Organisations is provided. The beneficiary has to provide land free from all encumbrances and to bear operation & maintenance costs.

So for assistance for setting up of eight Model Driving Training Schools has been sanctioned, in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, West Bengal, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Uttaranchal. Central Institute of Road Transport has been entrusted with job of rendering technical assistance, supervision and monitoring under the scheme.

Ship building hubs in Kochi

3847. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to set up two ship building hubs in Kochi contiguous with the sepcial economic zone proposed on land owned by Cochin Port Trust;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.